



GRACE COVENANT
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Service of Worship January 19, 2025 9:30am
Second Sunday after the Epiphany

Gathering

SONG TO GATHER

“Tis the Old Ship of Zion”

Spiritual

Praise Team

Tis the old ship of Zion ~ Get on board!
It has landed many a thousand ~ Get on board!
It will take us all to Heaven ~ Get on board!

In worship following reflective music, we are requesting a response of quiet or a contemplative “amen.” Any music that elicits a response of applause is to the glory of God.

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Rev. Karen Wright

*CALL TO WORSHIP

Revelation 22:1–2

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month, and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

A NEW HEAVEN AND A NEW EARTH

377 I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light

1 I want to walk as a child of the light. I want to fol - low
 2 I want to see the bright-ness of God. I want to look at
 3 I'm look-ing for the com - ing of Christ. I want to be with

Je - sus. God set the stars to give light to the world. The
 Je - sus. Clear Sun of righ-teous-ness, shine on my path, and
 Je - sus. When we have run with pa-tience the race, we

Refrain

star of my life is Je - sus.
 show me the way to the Fa - ther. In him there is no dark-ness at
 shall know the joy of Je - sus.

all. The night and the day are both a - like. The Lamb is the

The author-composer of this unhymed hymn regards it as a meditation and prayer deeply rooted in many scriptures, most connected with the theme of light: Genesis 1:17; Psalm 139:12; Isaiah 60:19; Malachi 4:2; John 14:8; Ephesians 5:8; Hebrews 12:1-2; 1 John 1:5; Revelation 21:23.

A NEW HEAVEN AND A NEW EARTH



A TIME WITH THE CHILDREN

(Children ages 4 through 1st grade may go to Awakening to Worship, our child-friendly worship time. Greeters at the back of the Sanctuary will go with children to Room 12 downstairs where parents may pick up their children following worship. Our Nursery welcomes young children and our ushers can assist families to the nursery located in the children's wing. Worship bags are available for children who stay in worship.)

CALL TO CONFESSION

Emily Nelson-Dixon

PRAYER OF CONFESSION *(Together)*

Most Holy and Merciful God: we have condemned racial injustice in our pronouncement, yet we cling to the privileges derived from social inequities. All too often we are blind to our complicity in maintaining systems of oppression and deferring the hopes and dreams of the oppressed for freedom. Give us the courage to name our sin, give us the strength to claim responsibility for our actions. Give us the grace to pay the price for changing our behavior. Through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

Christ is our peace; those who are divided He has made one. He has broken down the barriers of separation by His death and has built us up into one body, with God. To all who repent and believe He has promised reconciliation. Friends, believe the good news of the gospel, **In Christ we are all forgiven.**

SHARING THE PEACE OF CHRIST

ONE: May the peace of Christ be with you.

ALL: **And also with you and all others!**

*SONG OF PEACE

"Standin' in the Need of Prayer"

Spiritual

All

It's me! It's me. O Lord, standin' in the need of prayer. (Repeat)

**Not my brother, not my sister, but it's me, O Lord, standin' in the need of prayer.
Not my father, not my mother, but it's me, O Lord, standin' in the need of prayer.
It's me! It's me. O Lord, standin' in the need of prayer. (Repeat)**

**Not the elder, not the deacon, but it's me, O Lord, standin' in the need of prayer.
Not the stranger, not my neighbor, but it's me, O Lord, standin' in the need of prayer.
It's me! It's me. O Lord, standin' in the need of prayer. (Repeat)**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

A CALL TO STEWARDSHIP

OFFERING OF GIFTS AND MUSIC

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING (A prayer of workers in a community food kitchen, Lima, Peru.)

O God, food for the poor; Christ, our bread, give us a taste of the tender bread from your creation's table; bread newly taken from your heart's oven, food that comforts and nourishes us. A fraternal loaf that makes us human; join hand in hand, working and sharing. A warm loaf that makes us family; sacrament of your body, your wounded people. Amen.

Equipping

The Gospel of Freedom

Remembering the witness and Ministry of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

I.

Scripture Reading: Romans 12:1–2, 9–18

Esme Dixon

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God,

to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

Reader:

Jake Schmidt

“Transformed Non-Conformist”

Montgomery, Alabama

November 1954

We need to recapture something that the early Christians had. They went out aglow with a radical gospel. They were nonconformists in the truest sense of the word. They never allowed their actions to be shaped by the mundane patterns of this world. They were willing to sacrifice fame or fortune or life itself for a cause they knew was right. They were quantitatively small but qualitatively big. In those days Christianity was powerful. It stopped barbaric evils like infanticide and brought an end to the bloody gladiatorial shows. Its views on war were clearly known because of the refusal of every Christian to take up arms. At that time the church was still a numerical minority. But then it began to grow in numbers until it finally captured the Roman Empire. Gradually it became so entrenched in wealth and worldly prestige that it began to dilute the strong demands of the gospel and to conform to the status quo of the world. Ever since that time the church has been like a weak and ineffectual trumpet making uncertain sounds, rather than a strong trumpet sounding a clarion call for truth and righteousness. If the church of Jesus Christ is to regain its power, and its message its authentic ring, it must go out with a new determination not to conform to this world.

Musical Response:

“Wade in the Water”

Spiritual

Praise Team/All

**Wade in the water- wade in the water, children –
wade in the water- the Lord’s gonna trouble the water.**

Who's that yonder dressed in red? **Wade wade wade in the water**
Must be the children that Moses led! **Wade wade wade in the water**
You got to (Uh! Uh!)
Wade in the water- wade in the water, children –
wade in the water- the Lord's gonna trouble the water.

Who's that yonder dressed in white? **Wade wade wade in the water**
Must be the children of the Israelites! **Wade wade wade in the water**
You got to (Uh! Uh!)
Wade in the water- wade in the water, children –
wade in the water- the Lord's gonna trouble the water.

Who's that yonder dressed in green? **Wade wade wade in the water**
Must be the hypocrites turning mean!! **Wade wade wade in the water**
You got to (Uh! Uh!)
Wade in the water- wade in the water, children –
wade in the water- the Lord's gonna trouble the water.

II.

Scripture Reading: Acts 16:16–28

Emily Nelson Dixon

When they had brought them before the magistrates, they said, "These men are disturbing our city; they are Jews and are advocating customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to adopt or observe." The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates had them stripped of their clothing and ordered them to be beaten with rods. After they had given them a severe flogging, they threw them into prison and ordered the jailer to keep them securely. Following these instructions, he put them in the innermost cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was an earthquake, so violent that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all of the doors were opened, and everyone's chains were unfastened. When the jailer woke up and saw the prison doors wide open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself since he supposed that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted in a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here."

Reader:

Nathan Littlejohn

“Letter From Birmingham City Jail”

Birmingham, Alabama

April, 1963

...I am in Birmingham because injustice is here. Just as the eighth century prophets left their little villages and carried their “thus saith the Lord” far beyond the boundaries of their hometowns; and just as the Apostle Paul left his little village of Tarsus and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to practically every hamlet and city of the Graeco-Roman world, I too am compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my particular hometown. Like Paul, I must constantly respond to the Macedonian call for aid.

Moreover, I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states. I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. Never again can we afford to live with the narrow, provincial “outside agitator” idea. Anyone who lives in the United States can never be considered an outsider anywhere in this country.

Musical Response: Hymn #770 “I’m Gonna Eat at the Welcome Table” (vs. 1,3,5)

770 I'm Gonna Eat at the Welcome Table

1 I'm gon-na eat at the wel - come ta - ble;
 2 I'm gon-na eat and drink with my Je - sus;
 3 I'm gon-na join with sis - ters, broth - ers;
 4 Here all the world will find a wel - come;
 5 We're gon-na feast on milk and hon - ey;

I'm gon-na eat at the wel - come ta - ble, Al - le - lu - ia.
 I'm gon-na eat and drink with my Je - sus, Al - le - lu - ia.
 I'm gon-na join with sis - ters, broth - ers, Al - le - lu - ia.
 here all the world will find a wel - come, Al - le - lu - ia.
 we're gon-na feast on milk and hon - ey, Al - le - lu - ia.

I'm gon-na eat at the wel - come ta - ble; I'm gon - na
 I'm gon-na eat and drink with my Je - sus; I'm gon - na
 I'm gon-na join with sis - ters, broth - ers; I'm gon - na
 Here all the world will find a wel - come; here all the
 We're gon-na feast on milk and hon - ey; we're gon - na

eat at the wel - come ta - ble, Al - le - lu - ia.
 eat and drink with my Je - sus, Al - le - lu - ia.
 join with sis - ters, broth - ers, Al - le - lu - ia.
 world will find a wel - come, Al - le - lu - ia.
 feast on milk and hon - ey, Al - le - lu - ia.

The image of a great feast showing God's welcome of all people was part of Jewish tradition (Isaiah 25:6-9) and underlies Jesus' parable of the Great Banquet (Luke 14:15-24). Such equality remains as unknown to many people today as it was to the slaves who created this spiritual.

TEXT: African American spiritual, alt.
 MUSIC: African American spiritual; arr. Carl Diton, 1980, alt.
 Music Arr. © 1930, ren. G. Schirmer, Inc.

WELCOME TABLE
 Irregular

*They hate the one who reproves in the gate,
and they abhor the one who speaks the truth.
Therefore because you trample on the poor, and take from them levies of grain,
you have built houses of hewn stone, but you shall not live in them;
you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink their wine.
For I know how many are your transgressions,
and how great are your sins—
you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe,
and push aside the needy in the gate.
Therefore the prudent will keep silent in such a time,
for it is an evil time.*

*Seek good and not evil that you may live; and so the Lord, the God of hosts, will be with you, just
as you have said. Hate evil and love good, and establish justice in the gate...*

*Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an
ever-flowing stream.*

Reader:

Kelly Scarborough

*“Letter From Birmingham City Jail”
Birmingham, Alabama
April, 1963*

*I must make two honest confessions to you, my Christian and Jewish
brothers. First, I must confess that over the last few years I have been
gravely disappointed with the white moderate who is more devoted to
“order” than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence
of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who
constantly says, “I agree with your goals, but I can’t agree with your methods
of direct action.”; who paternalistically feels that he can set a timetable
for another man’s freedom; who lives by the myth of time and who
constantly advises the Negro to wait until a “more convenient season.”
Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than
absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance
is much more bewildering than outright rejection.*

*...I gradually gained a bit of satisfaction from being considered an
extremist. Was not Jesus an extremist in love—“Love your enemies
and pray for them that despitefully use you.” Was not Amos an
extremist for justice—“Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness
like a mighty stream... So the question is not whether we will be extremist,*

*but what kind of extremist will we be. Will we be extremists for hate or
extremists for love? Will we be extremists for the preservation of injustice,
or will we be extremists for the cause of justice.*

Musical Response:

“No Longer a Slave”
Praise Team/All

by Zach Williams

I’m no longer a slave to fear; I am a child of God. (Repeat)

You unravel me with a melody. You surround me with a song
of deliverance from my enemies til all my fears are gone.

I’m no longer a slave to fear; I am a child of God. (Repeat)

From my mother’s womb you have chosen me; Love has called my name.
I’ve been born again into your family; your blood flows through my veins.

I’m no longer a slave to fear; I am a child of God. (Repeat)

You split the sea so I could walk right through it. My fears were drowned in perfect love.

You rescued me so I could stand and sing: I am a child of God. I am a child of God!

I’m no longer a slave to fear; I am a child of God. (Repeat)

IV.

Scripture Reading: Psalm 62:1–3, 5–7

James Schmidt

*For God alone my soul waits in silence;
from him comes my salvation.
God alone is my rock and my salvation.
my fortress; I shall never be shaken.
How long will you assail a person,
will you batter your victim, all of you,
as you would a leaning wall, a tottering fence?*

*For God alone my soul waits in silence,
for my hope is from the Lord.
God alone is my rock and my salvation.
my fortress; I shall not be shaken.
On God rests my deliverance and my honor;
my mighty rock, my refuge is in God.*

Reader:

Barbara Douglas

“Letter From Birmingham City Jail”
Birmingham, Alabama
April, 1963

I must close now. But before closing I am impelled to mention one other point in your statement that troubled me profoundly. You warmly commended the Birmingham police force for keeping "order" and "preventing violence." I don't believe you would have so warmly commended the police force if you had seen its angry violent dogs literally biting six unarmed, nonviolent Negroes...

I wish you had commended the Negro sit-inners and demonstrators of Birmingham for their sublime courage, their willingness to suffer and their amazing discipline in the midst of the most inhuman provocation. One day the South will recognize its real heroes. They will be the James Merediths, courageously and with a majestic sense of purpose facing jeering and hostile mobs and the anguishing loneliness that characterizes the life of the pioneer. They will be old oppressed battered Negro women, symbolized in a seventy-two year old woman of Montgomery, Alabama, who rose up with a sense of dignity and with her people decided not to ride segregated buses and responded to one who inquired about her tiredness with ungrammatical profundity: "My feet is tired, but my soul is rested."

Musical Response:

"Precious Lord, Take My Hand"

Thomas Andrew Dorsey

Praise Team

Precious Lord, take my hand. Lead me on help me stand.

I am tired, I am weak, I am worn.

Through the storm, through the night,

Lead me on to the light.

Take my hand, precious Lord, and lead me home.

When my way grows drear, precious Lord, linger near.

When my life is almost gone.

Hear my cry, hear my call

Hold my hand, lest I fall.

Take my hand, precious Lord, and lead me home.

When the darkness appears and the night draws near

And the day is past and gone.

At the river I stand

Guide my feet, hold my hand.

Take my hand, precious Lord, and lead me home.

Scripture Reading: Micah 4:1–5

Kathy Bures

In days to come

the mountain of the Lord's temple

shall be established as the highest of the mountains,

and shall be raised up above the hills.

*Peoples shall stream to it, and many nations shall come and say:
"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
to the house of the God of Jacob;
that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths."
For out of Zion shall go forth instruction,
and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.
He shall judge between many peoples,
and shall arbitrate between strong nations far away;
they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more;
but they shall all sit under their own vines
and under their own fig trees,
and no one shall make them afraid;
for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken.*

Reader:
Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech
Oslo, Norway
December, 1964

Video of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

I refuse to accept the idea that man is mere flotsam and jetsam in the river of life that surrounds him. I refuse to accept the idea that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daylight of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality.

I refuse to accept the cynical notion that nation after nation must spiral down a militaristic stairway into the hell of thermonuclear destruction. I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality. That is why right temporarily defeated is stronger than evil triumphant.

I believe that even amid today's mortar bursts and whining bullets, there is still hope for a brighter tomorrow. I believe that wounded justice, lying prostrate on the blood-flowing streets of our nation, can be lifted from this dust of shame to reign supreme among the children of men.

I have the audacity to believe that peoples everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality and freedom for their spirits. I believe that what self-centered men have torn down men other-centered can build up. I still believe that one day mankind will bow before the altars of God and be crowned triumphant over

war and bloodshed and nonviolent redemptive goodwill will proclaim the rule of the land. "And the lion and the lamb shall lie down together and every man shall sit under his own vine and fig tree and none shall be afraid." I still believe that we shall overcome.

Musical Response: Hymn 379

"We Shall Overcome" (vs. 1,3,5)

379 We Shall Overcome

1 We shall o - ver - come; we shall o - ver - come;
 2 We'll walk hand in hand; we'll walk hand in hand;
 3 We shall live in peace; we shall live in peace;
 4 We are not a - fraid; we are not a - fraid;
 5 God will see us through; God will see us through;

we shall o - ver - come some - day.
 we'll walk hand in hand some - day.
 we shall live in peace some - day.
 we are not a - fraid to - day.
 God will see us through to - day.

Refrain

O, deep in my heart I do be -

lieve we shall o - ver - come some - day!

Though now associated primarily with the Civil Rights Movement of the mid-20th century, this spiritual most likely dates from the days of the slave trade; and similarities with the tune SICILIAN MARINERS (see no. 546) suggest that it might have been a worksong aboard slave ships.

TEXT: African American spiritual
 MUSIC: African American spiritual; arr. William Farley Smith, 1986
 Music Arr. © 1989 The United Methodist Publishing House (admin. The Copyright Company)

WE SHALL OVERCOME
 Irregular

Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho, and the Lord showed him the whole land... The Lord said to him, "This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to your descendants': I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not cross over there. Then Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there in the land of Moab, at the Lord's command.

Reader:

Andrew Sellers

"I See the Promised Land"

Memphis, Tennessee

April, 1968

Well, I don't know what will happen now. We've got some difficult days ahead. But it doesn't matter with me now. Because I've been to the mountaintop. And I don't mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And he's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you, But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people will get to the promised land. And I'm happy tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.

Musical Response:

"Do, Lord!"

Spiritual

All

I've got a home in glory land that outshines the sun! (3x)

Away beyond the blues!

Do Lord, oh do Lord, oh do remember me (3x)

Away beyond the blues!

I took Jesus as my savior, you can take him too (3x)

Way beyond the blues.

Do Lord, oh do Lord, oh do remember me (3x)

Away beyond the blues!

Sending

*HYMN 339

"Lift Every Voice and Sing"

339 Lift Every Voice and Sing

1 Lift ev - ery voice and sing till earth and heav - en
 2 Ston - y the road we trod, bit - ter the chas - tening
 3 God of our wea - ry years, God of our si - lent

ring, ring with the har - mo - nies of lib - er -
 rod, felt in the days when hope un - born had
 tears, thou who hast brought us thus far on the

ty. Let our re - joic - ing rise high as the lis - tening
 died. Yet, with a stead - y beat, have not our wea - ry
 way; thou who hast by thy might led us in - to the

skies; let it re - sound loud as the roll - ing sea.
 feet come to the place for which our par - ents sighed?
 light, keep us for - ev - er in the path, we pray.

Initially a poem for a school assembly at which Booker T. Washington spoke on Lincoln's birthday in 1900, this text and tune have gained national recognition and devotion, not only within the African American community, but also among all who seek liberation from oppression.

THE LIFE OF THE NATIONS

Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us;
 We have come o - ver a way that with tears has been wa - tered;
 Lest our feet stray from the plac - es, our God, where we met thee;

sing a song full of the hope that the pres - ent has brought
 we have come, tread - ing our path through the blood of the slaugh -
 lest, our hearts drunk with the wine of the world, we for - get

us. Fac - ing the ris - ing sun of our new day be -
 tered, out from the gloom - y past, till now we stand at
 thee; shad - owed be - neath thy hand may we for - ev - er

gun, let us march on, till vic - to - ry is won.
 last where the white gleam of our bright star is cast.
 stand, true to our God, true to our na - tive land.

CHARGE AND BENEDICTION

Rev. Karen Wright

As the Savior so taught ...
go now and overcome.
Overcome racial hatred with love and understanding.
Overcome sexism with mutual honor and respect.
Overcome social inequities
with fair and equal educational and employment opportunities.
Overcome mean-heartedness with a kind word or good deed.
Overcome war, poverty, hunger, and suffering
throughout our urban streets and lands abroad,
by sharing the love of Christ Jesus with your neighbor.
Go now and overcome!

—adapted from [The AfricanAmericanLectionary.org](http://TheAfricanAmericanLectionary.org). Posted on [Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Worship Resources](#), on the Disciples of Christ [Council on Christian Unity](#) website.

*SONG TO SEND

“Do Lord”

Spiritual

All

Do Lord, oh do Lord, oh do remember me (3x)

Away beyond the blues!

I’ve got a home in glory land that outshines the sun! (3x)

Away beyond the blues!

Do Lord, oh do Lord, oh do remember me (3x)

Away beyond the blues!

**Stand in body or spirit*

GOD’S PEACE TO YOU

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